

The Sacrifice

By

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The most significant events in human history are not the wars, conquests, discoveries and striking of human documents; rather they are the judgments of God and the sacrifices He has required.

These judgments are a token of the final Judgment and the sacrifices typify the final sacrifice which Jesus made on Calvary.

The first judgment fell upon Adam and Eve in the Garden and, through them, upon the entire earth (Genesis 3) resulting in the sentence of death being passed upon man and all his descendants. The first sacrifice followed when God Himself, for the first time, shed the blood of animals from whence He obtained the skins in which He clothed His creatures to cover the result of their sinfulness. The second major judgment also fell not only upon man but upon the creation as well when “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Peter 3:6, Gen.6:13). When the waters had subsided, Noah and those who were saved in the ark “built an altar unto Jehovah, and took of every clean beast and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8:20). God’s answer to man’s sin was judgment and the effect of judgment was death—death by the flood. Man’s answer to God (without a doubt, according to God’s instructions) was death — death by animal sacrifice.

The simplest and clearest picture of judgment and sacrifice is seen in the slaying of the Passover lamb in Egypt. Judgment had already been manifested by the plagues upon the Egyptians; water turned to blood; frogs; lice; flies; murrain on the livestock; boils; hail; locusts and darkness. The tenth plague was the death of all the firstborn in the land. The only means of escaping this death was through the sacrifice of a lamb. The lamb was to be without blemish, a male of the first year, and was to be killed in the afternoon: “and they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door posts of the house wherein they shall eat it ... and thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s Passover. For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt both man and beast . . . And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:7 & 11-13).

Yahweh made it clear that there would be death in every household where the lamb had not been slain; the first of that household would die. Where the Passover was sacrificed, in this case a lamb, the firstborn would be spared; none would be destroyed from that family because the lamb was slain as a substitute. Scripture states that the blood on the door posts was a token indicating that the sacrifice had been made. It is important to note

that the blood was not the saving factor itself; before the blood could be applied there had to be the death of the animal. The blood was a token, to show that the lamb had been slain.

For 1400 years descendants of Abraham “kept the Passover.” None were allowed to forget that the Passover lamb was a substitutionary death; the lamb being sacrificed in the place of the firstborn.

When John looked upon Jesus he fully understood that He was the “Lamb that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). John was rightfully awed by the impact of this truth; his preaching reflected his full comprehension of God’s judgment and the sacrifice required of Christ. “He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:11-12). On the one hand John saw judgment of the race in the final destruction of the sinner, thoroughly cleansing God’s universe of sin. On the other hand he saw Christ dying in the place of the believer as the lamb died in Egypt.

“For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ” (1 Corinthians 5:7): Jesus is the fulfillment of all the animal sacrifices from the time of Adam. The New Testament teaches that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). Animals cannot properly be substituted for human beings. The true and final substitute, in being put to death for man’s sins, had to be that which was equal to man. “Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same” (Heb. 2:14). Thus Jesus taking upon Himself flesh, “being made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man” became the actual sacrifice that thoroughly takes away sin; hence, He did something in dying that no animal could do, he actually died as a man under the curse of sin because “He was made to be sin on our behalf” (2 Cor.5:21). Those devout men of old were not following a primitive rite and slaying these animals in ignorance. They were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Christ, and the true Lamb of God. The animals that were slain were types to indicate the final sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

In God’s eternal plan Jesus was the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’ (Rev. 13:8) “... but now once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26) “For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). “We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). There are two things that stand out crystal clear in the scriptural teaching of sacrifice. (1) In the shedding of blood, the purpose was not to obtain blood. This could be done without the death of the animal. Blood was a token of death: death was the central point of the sacrifice. (2) Neither was the purpose to torture the animal. Instructions regarding the ceremony prohibited undue suffering beyond the normal terror and pain which the animal knew by instinct, and the natural pain that accompanied having its throat slashed. The object of sacrifice was to take the animal’s life. It was the entire animal that was sacrificed; the flesh was either

eaten or consumed by fire. "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11). The meaning of the blood is simply this: when it was poured out, the animal died.

Therefore, the significance of the blood of Christ is in the fact that He died. It is impossible to estimate the suffering He might have endured during the three hours in which He hung on the cross. But the significance of His death is not in the amount of His suffering. It is a mere human invention that, as some evangelists would say, "Jesus suffered the agony of an eternity in hell during those three hours." Such statements are made to support a preconceived idea of the meaning of hell and have no scripture to support them. Undoubtedly His suffering on the cross was horribly intense. It is hard to imagine the physical pain of such a crucifixion, to say nothing of the terrible feeling of being forsaken by the Father, plus the fact of His having to assume the shame and guilt of wicked and sinful men. But the finality and totality of our justification rests upon this: that Jesus suffered death-death that was final and total; hence it is written, "Christ died for us" and we are now "justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:8-9). His was not merely a spiritual separation nor spiritual suffering: "He bore our sins in His body upon the tree" (1 Peter 2:24), and thus paid the penalty for our sin by the sacrifice of Himself in human death. So Paul writes that in eating the bread and drinking the cup of Communion "you proclaim the Lord's death" (1 Cor. 11:26).

The greatest event of history to date was in the judgment that was demonstrated at Calvary. Speaking of His approaching death, Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world" (John 12:31): Upon Him fell the judgment due the sinner. "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Thus judgment and sacrifice are eternally fused together in the death of Christ. Since the full penalty for sin has been met by that sacrifice, we conclude that all who reject this Grace will pay the penalty for their own sin at the Day of Judgment when they are finally and forever put to death.

The Passover Lamb was to be roasted with fire and all that was not eaten was to be burned. The sin offering which was ordered as a yearly sacrifice for all the sins of the people was to be burned outside the camp. (Lev. 4:12). It was to be completely consumed by the fire until only ashes were left. Here is portrayed the judgment of God at the end of the world. As the farmer cleanses his threshing floor by burning the chaff, the final judgment of the world will be executed by fire and once again even as in the time of Adam and in the time of Noah the whole earth will be included. "But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men," (2 Peter 3:7). So the final event at the close of history will be that of Judgment and sacrifice; the judgment rendered upon all the world to destroy sinners except those whose Passover has been sacrificed, that Passover being Jesus who was put to death on the cross.

There will never be another sacrifice. If a million animals were to be sacrificed in a new Temple in Jerusalem, it would avail nothing. Christ, the Lamb, has already been slain. His sacrifice fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, types, shadows and patterns. All

who are ever saved will have been saved by the death of Jesus, God in the flesh, who received the death blow for sin for all who truly believe on Him.

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